CONFERENCE OF THE EIGHTEEN-NATION COMMITTEE ON DISARMAMENT

ENDC/165
27 January 1966
Original: ENGLISH

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Message dated 27 January 1966 from President Johnson to the Conference of the Eighteen-Nation Committee on Disarmament

"The avoidance of war and particularly nuclear war is the central, common concern of all mankind.

"My country is dedicated to this end. The effort to control, and reduce -- and ultimately eliminate -- modern engines of nuclear destruction is fundamental to our policy. We have, with all mankind, a common interest in acting now to prevent nuclear spread, to halt the nuclear arms race, and to reduce nuclear stocks.

"For this reason, we must press on with our work in Geneva. It is true that our meeting is shadowed by continuing aggression against the people and Government of South Viet-Nam. There are differences among the members of this Conference on Viet-Nam, but these differences make our common interest in preventing nuclear spread and curbing the nuclear arms race all the more important to pursue. Even while our own nation is engaged in necessary resistance to aggression in South-East Asia, it must continue to pursue every avenue for stable peace, both in Viet-Nam and throughout the world. That great general effort has no more important set of goals than those of disarmament, which are the business of this Conference.

"I have instructed the United States delegation to urge upon your meeting the following 7-point programme:

"1. First, let us seek a non-proliferation treaty which, in the words of the United Nations General Assembly is 'void of any loopholes which might permit nuclear or non-nuclear powers to proliferate, directly or indirectly, nuclear weapons in any form.' We are prepared to sign such a treaty, making it applicable to nuclear and non-nuclear countries alike. We are prepared to work with other countries to assure that no non-nuclear country acquires its own nuclear weapons, gains national control over nuclear weapons, achieves the power itself to fire nuclear weapons, or receives assistance in manufacturing or testing nuclear weapons. We are prepared to agree that these things should not be done directly or indirectly, through third countries or groups of countries, or through units of the armed forces or military personnel under any military alliance.

"2. Second, through a non-proliferation treaty and through efforts outside such a treaty, we must continue to secure application of International Atomic Energy Agency or equivalent international safeguards over peaceful nuclear activities. To this end, I urge agreement that all transfers of nuclear materials or equipment for peaceful purposes to countries which do not have nuclear weapons be under IAEA or equivalent international safeguards. At the same time, the major nuclear powers should accept in increasing measure the same international safeguards they recommend for other states.

"Recently, many responsible members of both Houses of the Congress of the United States introduced resolutions dealing with measures to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons. These resolutions are an indication of the importance that the people of the United States attribute to such measures, and to the role that international safeguards should play in them. I fully share these views.

"3. Third, so that those who forswear nuclear weapons may forever refrain without fear from entering the nuclear arms race, let us strive to strengthen United Nations and other international security arrangements. Meanwhile, the nations that do not seek the nuclear path can be sure that they will have our strong support against threats of nuclear blackmail.

"4. Fourth, my country persists in its belief that the perils of proliferation would be materially reduced by an extension of the limited test ban treaty to cover underground nuclear tests. For such an extension, the United States will require only that number and kind of inspections which modern science shows to be necessary to assure that the treaty is being faithfully observed. We call upon those nations truly interested in such a ban to provide to this Committee any improvements in means for the detection and identification of seismic events which their research efforts may have developed.

"5. Fifth, let us seek agreement not to increase, and indeed to reduce, nuclear materials in weapons stockpiles. The US continues to urge a verified halt in the production of fissionable materials for use in weapons. We continue to urge that such a halt be accompanied by the transfer of large quantities of fissionable material to peaceful purposes, under international safeguards. We continue to urge the demonstrated destruction of thousands of nuclear weapons by the US and USSR to produce this fissionable material. We have also stated our willingness, if others

cannot now agree to halting all production of fissionable material for use in weapons, to accept step-by-step reductions of such production by the shutting down of equivalent facilities on a plant-by-plant basis, with the same type of effective inspection applicable to all.

"6. Sixth, as another step to reduce the dangers and burdens of nuclear arms, let us direct our attention to modern, long-range, high-speed carriers of nuclear destruction. I urge continued exploration of the terms and conditions which could make acceptable to all the proposal I put before you in 1964 for a freeze on offensive and defensive strategic bombers and missiles designed to carry nuclear weapons. If progress can be made here, the United States will be prepared to explore the possibility of significant reductions in the number of these delivery vehicles. To facilitate agreement, let us begin now to seek common understanding of some of the issues involved in both these proposals.

"7. Seventh, as we focus on nuclear arms, let us not forget that resources are being devoted to non-nuclear arms races all arpund the world. These resources might better be spent on feeding the hungry, healing the sick and teaching the uneducated. The cost of acquiring and maintaining one squadron of supersonic aircraft diverts resources that would build and maintain a university. We suggest therefore that countries, on a regional basis, explore ways to limit competition among themselves for costly weapons often sought for reasons of illusory prestige. The initiative for arrangements of this kind should, of course, come from the regions concerned. The interested countries should undertake not to acquire from any source, including production of their own as well as importation from others, military equipment which they proscribe. If such arrangements can be worked out and assurance can be given that they will be observed, the United States stands ready to respect them.

"Each of these steps would contribute toward reducing the danger and destruction of war. Each of them would take us further down the path toward our ultimate goal of general and complete disarmament. Yet each of them is possible of achievement today if only all nations have the will.

"The limited test ban treaty lit a candle of hope in the darkness. The gleam of that candle shows the way to a brighter tomorrow if we will but follow. We must move toward it quickly while there is yet time."